

**Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 21st June, 2012.**

**Present:** Councillors Minhas (Chair, left 7.15 p.m.), Bains, Dar, Plenty, Sohal and A S Wright (Vice-Chair)

**Non-Voting Co-Opted Members Present:** Darren Morris (Customer Senate) and Terry Conroy (Slough Federation of Tenants and Residents)

**Also present under Rule 30:** Councillor Strutton

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Carter and O'Connor

**PART 1**

**50. Declarations of Interest**

None were received.

**51. Election of Chair**

The nomination of Councillor Minhas was moved and seconded. There being no other nominations it was –

**Resolved** – That Councillor Minhas be appointed Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the 2012 / 2013 municipal year.

(Councillor Minhas in the Chair)

**52. Election of Vice-Chair**

The nomination of Councillor Wright was moved and seconded. There being no other nominations it was –

**Resolved** – That Councillor Wright be appointed Vice-Chair of the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel for the 2012 / 2013 municipal year.

**53. Minutes of the last meeting held on 1st March 2012**

The minutes of the last meeting held on the 1 March 2012 were approved as a correct record, subject to confirmation of declaration of interest by Councillor Strutton relating to Minute No. 45.

Matters Arising: Members requested confirmation as to the arrangements made for them for the Olympic Torch Relay as discussed at 1 March 2012 Panel meeting.

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### 54. Member Questions

Question submitted by Councillor Wright

Please could officers respond to the following:

Two traders on the Britwell estate have been asked for £9000 each in backdated rent rises backdating back 8 years. Rent rises had been imposed on businesses in the area in 2005, but due to an error these 2 traders had not received the rise.

The error had been discovered during a rents review, and the demands issued, along with an apology, to be fair to everyone. Legal limitations meant that the demand was for 6 years rather than the full 8 years.

Response from John Rice (Interim AD, Environment and Regeneration):

“Avarto, as part of the new contract, have reviewed the implementation of rent reviews. They identified that the a rent review was undertaken by Valuation Services and Finance but for reasons which are unclear the rent reviews were not implemented for 2 of the traders on Wentworth Avenue that are the subject of the article in the Slough Express. Unfortunately the outstanding amount dated back eight years but the Council is statutorily limited to be able to recover only up to six years of back rents.

Whilst highly unfortunate to have to seek recovery of the outstanding rent, it would be unfair to other traders who have paid the full rent not to seek recovery. Consequently Avarto on behalf of the Council issued a demand for the payment of the arrears and offered terms for the repayment over the next two years.”

Members asked that confirmation be given whether there was a mechanism in place to allow for repayment to take place over a longer period should the economic climate impact on traders ability to pay.

### 55. Neighbourhoods and Community Services Scrutiny Panel- Work Programme- 2012/2013

Sarah Forsyth, Scrutiny Officer, outlined a draft programme in which a number of priorities and topics had been identified for the 2012/13 municipal year.

The Panel endorsed the suggested topics set out in Paragraph 5 of the report and suggested a number of further topics which could be added.

#### Resolved –

- (a) That the Panel add the following items to its work programme for the 2012/13 municipal year:

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1. Review of effects of council housing on resident's health (as requested by the Health Scrutiny Panel)
2. Youth Facilities Provision
3. Accessibility Issues

- (b) That the work programme as set out in the report for the 2012/13 Municipal Year be endorsed.

**Note:** Following completion of Agenda Item 6 (Minute No. 55) Councillor Minhas excused herself from the meeting and Councillor Wright assumed the Chair.

(Councillor Wright, Vice Chair in the Chair)

#### 56. Slough Borough Council- Tenancy Agreement

Ken Hopkins, Head of Housing Management, presented the report on proposed new Tenancy Agreement, which aimed to provide a consistent approach to the Council's management of tenancies, clarify what is required of tenants, provide an effect tool for managing tenancies and taking enforcement action where appropriate, and to take account of changes to the Housing Act 1985 introduced by the Localism Act 2011.

The Panel discussed the impact of differing types of succession tenancies, and differing lengths of flexible tenancies.

#### **Recommended –**

- a) that Cabinet approve the new Tenancy Agreement;
- b) that Cabinet approve that SBC specifies in the Tenancy Agreement that succession is permitted for spouses, civil partners and the children of tenants, provided that they meet the qualifying criteria of having lived in the property as their only home for at least a year;
- c) that Cabinet approve the use of 3-year flexible tenancies where appropriate and when the necessary tenancy strategy is in place;

**Noted –** the consultation exercise which will offer all tenants an opportunity to comment on the proposed agreement.

#### 57. Introduction of Dog Control Orders

Dympna Sanders, Head of Neighbourhood Enforcement, presented the report on proposals to implement a range of Dog Control Orders following a public consultation.

The consultation was carried out by the Neighbourhood Enforcement Team during the summer 2011, interviewing a total of 204 people across the Borough. The results showed an overwhelming response in favour of the

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introduction of the Orders, with a majority of the measures proposed receiving over 90% support. The notable exception was the exclusion of dogs from marked sports grounds, which received only 66% support.

The Panel discussed the overall impact of Fixed Penalty Notices on dog fouling, and were informed that due to the legal requirement of actually witnessing the offence the number of FPNs issued was minimal, but that letters were issued to offenders if the public reported an offence. It was felt by officers that the impact of education on the public could be seen clearly in the drop of dog fouling offences in local parks following the 'Cut the Crap' campaign in 2010/11 (a leaflet from the campaign was circulated to the Panel), and officers were undertaking early-morning patrols of 'hotspot' areas in order to target the worst offenders.

### Recommended –

- a) that the Cabinet, in endorsing the findings of the public consultation, approve the introduction of Dog Control Orders in order to tackle the following prescribed offences under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005:
  - i. failure to remove dog faeces (Borough-wide Order);
  - ii. failure to keep a dog on a lead in specified locations;
  - iii. failure to pick up and keep a dog on a lead when directed by an Authorised Officer (Borough-wide Order);
  - iv. permitting a dog to enter land from which dogs are excluded; and
  - v. limit the number of dogs under control of any person in a designated area (Borough-wide Order)
  
- b) that the Cabinet endorse the addition of the following as paragraph 85a, Part 3 to the Scheme of Officer Delegations for Assistant Director of Enforcement and Regulation:

*“Authority to amend and/or extend existing Dog Control Orders in consultation with the relevant Commissioner.”*

### 58. Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

Details of the following information reports were noted:

- *Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel*

### 59. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10 September 2012.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)